



Managing the Transition from Further to Higher Education

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1. Introduction



- ❖ As documented above, there was an increased level of drop-out at level 4 compared to levels 5 and 6 in 2011-2012.
- ❖ Numerous factors influence student retention including; student attitude (Tinto, 1982), perceived satisfaction of faculty and classes (De Shields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005), and social adjustment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).
- ❖ An increased knowledge of the transition period is pertinent given that students who have a positive FE experience are more likely to be retained and satisfied at HE (De Shields et al., 2005).
- ❖ A greater understanding of the transition from FE to HE would be useful given students have reported feeling unprepared and low in confidence (Byrne et al., 2012), with a view to work toward improving retention rates of first year undergraduates.

2. Objectives

- ❖ To examine multiple perceptions of the challenges and facilitative elements of the FE to HE transition.
- ❖ To provide evidence-based recommendations to improve level 4 student retention in the department of sport and exercise.

3. Method

- ❖ Following ethical approval, a qualitative approach was adopted with semi-structured interviews conducted with 3 participants (a FE lecturer, HE lecturer, and retained level 4 student).
- ❖ Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to elicit themes relevant to the research objectives.
- ❖ Transcripts and analysis were member-checked to ensure trustworthiness of the data.

4. Results

Misconceptions of HE & preparation	Independence	Enjoyment	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic environment and standard • Living arrangements • Direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic motivation • Adaptation to teaching styles • Accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator to thrive • Barrier to retain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-HE • During-HE • Correct path?

Table 1: Categories and higher order themes in relation to the FE to HE transition

Students aren't prepared for the quality of work that is expected at university level, they don't possess the required skills to write academically

I took each thing as it came and I dealt with it quite well... because I enjoyed my course that helped everything become much easier

There has to be an internal fire inside a student, a strong desire and ability to self-motivate themselves

Both sides of the bridge – FE needs to develop and measure study skills and HE need to measure their new recruits' study skills and give options to develop

5. Discussion

- ❖ Various factors, particularly being under-prepared (Byrne et al., 2012) influenced the challenging FE to HE transition.
- ❖ Multiple perspectives provided an understanding of the key role to be played by FE *and* HE in facilitating transition.
- ❖ Results support proposition of ubiquitous focus on literacy and study skills (Nandeshwar, Menzies, & Nelson, 2011).
- ❖ Many factors are controllable and thus an awareness of these should promote positive change.

6. Strategies for Improvement

- ❖ FE taster days at HE institutions that give authentic experience of work standard and case studies.
- ❖ Explicitly demonstrate the bigger picture to students at FE and HE (i.e., HE part of continuous development process).
- ❖ Bridging workshops at FE to develop and monitor study skills that are continued at HE with transparent feedback.
- ❖ At HE, students could immediately write a 500 word essay that is built on and progressed each week until module end.
- ❖ Consider that HE is unique - challenges await but developing the controllable aspects will increase the likelihood students are retained, enjoy their learning, and thrive in HE.

7. Limitations and Future Research

- ❖ Small scale study (3 participants, 1 HE and 1 FE institution).
- ❖ Future research may wish to incorporate a quantitative approach to strengthen the proposed recommendations. Indeed, implementing and assessing the effectiveness of the suggested strategies appears warranted.
- ❖ Further interviews would not only elicit more depth, but evidence links between categories/themes thereby providing knowledge of underlying mechanisms.

8. References

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